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585 takes place. This is drunk only by the headmen of the two villages. Water from a brass pot is spilt on the ground and the head-
585 man of the bride's village delivers a marriage sermon. Here and
• 537 there the words of the sermon may vary slightly, but the form is fairly well established. The bridegroom is addressed: "Well now then, from today we have tied a wooden cow bell round your neck. When you go out to hunt and when you go to collect fruits in the forest you may eat a half of whatever you find, but you must bring a half of it home." The bride is told: "Well now, until today you have been able to go about just as you wanted to, but from today we have tied a wooden cow bell round your neck; you can no longer go about to markets and festivals as you please." The headman of the bridegroom's village is told: "O father headman, from today our two villages have become as one. When the girl has any illness or when she dies, it is for you to see to it. Up till now you have not been responsible, but from today we shall require of you blood of the head, blood of the ear. If any mishap befalls and you cannot spare a man to send the news, then you must send word by a dog. Formerly you were strangers and you used to pass by our village. Now if any of your people is passing this way going to hunt or going to market and he is thirsty, he must stop and ask for a drink." The headman of the bridegroom's village makes a suitable reply acknowledging the new ties that bind them together.

583 The comparative freedom of association between youths and girls in markets, fairs and other gatherings of Santals gives rise to situations that cannot be dealt with as normal marriages, and so other forms are recognized. When an unmarried girl becomes pregnant, providing there are no barriers to the marriage on account of clan and family relationships, she is encouraged to go to the home of the youth involved in the case. Bride price is paid, but the ceremony of putting vermilion on her head has to be postponed until after the birth of her child. Sometimes the village has to take cognizance of a situation arising out of the disagreement of the parents of either a girl or a boy to a marriage which they both desire. It may be that the boy and girl have run away together. Then the village officials call a council to regularize the situation. The father of the bride can claim only half the usual amount of bride price and the only cloths provided by the bridegroom's father are for the bride's mother and maternal grandmother. The third cloth is not given, I was told, "because it has been eaten by white ants", i.e. when the young couple lay out on the ground of the forest together. There are two ways open to

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dead person, and when it is slain the side on which the animal falls is retained by the giver, while the upturned side is retained by the villagers. The expression used for the side on which the animal falls is *gur lofom*, and this term is also used for any animal that has been reserved for a forthcoming festival and then could not be used because of a death in the family during the interval. When the feast has been prepared, the guests are called to sit down by the host, who calls out three times: "Come along, all. It is time for the *bhat* and *bofom* to eat the rice." *Bhat* and *bofom* are the names of two beggar castes.[1] After all have eaten, a conversation takes place between the villagers on the following lines. A spokesman of the villagers speaks to the assembled company: "In virgin soil and uncut forest, O fathers, such and such a headman cut the trees and made a level plain where he put up huts to dwell in, O fathers. Things went well with them, O fathers, their numbers increased, they gathered together like a flock of doves, O fathers. Now in this house there has been a death and the people in it have been cleansed from defilement, O fathers." Next he addresses the headman: "O father headman, allow us to go to our homes, for all things have been completed." The headman replies: "Fathers, you may go. Go to Sikar[2] and bring from there Moloo the washerman and Kisto the barber." The villagers ask the headman: "And what will they get from us?" To which he replies: "They ought to get from you a basket of rice and an uncastrated goat." Then the villagers ask to be excused: "O father, Sikar is a long way off and who is able to go? Let us be our own washerman and our own barber. Let it be said that from today all the work is finished for this world and the next." When they have been excused, those who carried the corpse to the burning ground have their say: "O fathers, O five, we gave and burnt some wood", whereupon they are given small pieces of burnt wood in exchange. Similarly, they speak of the spade which was used, in return for which they receive some meat. They tell how their eyebrows were singed in the fire and for this receive some beer in a new pot. They take these things away from the house to consume later.

So end the death ceremonies. Most of the living are thereby freed from their obligations to the dead one and also from the dangers to which this period in their lives has exposed them. As far as they could, the rites have ensured the future happiness of

[1] *Bofom* is a form of *Vaishnava*. Cf. reference in the *Karam* festival myth in Chapter 9, p. 118.

[2] A country in which the ancestors once dwelt, according to tradition.